

here said, "We refuse to be held down by the storm; we will overcome it."

The job of the Federal Government has been to help. And I made a pledge early on in the process that I would work with the United States Congress, members of both political parties, to get some healthy checks written. And it's important for the check writers, the taxpayers of the United States, to know that progress is being made with their money and that the people of Mississippi appreciate the fact that the country came to help when they needed help. It's a neighborly thing to do.

And secondly, I fully understand there's still work to be done, that even though progress has been made, this storm was so devastating that we have still got to stay focused on the task, and that we've got to work with the Governor and the local officials, the supervisors and the mayors, to continue to help address their needs.

And one of the things I've heard loud and clear is that there's a continued frustration with the slowness of Federal response at times. And therefore, it's important for me to hear that and my friend Don Powell to hear that so that we can come and do what the people expect us to do, which is to respond to the needs of people in Mississippi.

I'm very proud of the leadership your Governor has shown. He showed leadership during the storm; he showed leadership in the aftermath of the storm; and he continues to be deeply concerned about the people of Mississippi. And he, along with two fine United States Senators, are constantly talking to the White House in pretty plain language about what more needs to be done. And I hope he would say that we listen, and if possible, respond in a constructive way.

I'm proud to be back again. I intend to keep coming back so long as I'm the President—and perhaps after the Presidency, A.J. Now, A.J. has given me a great gift. Instead of the key to the city, he gave me a Biloxi, Mississippi, license plate. It's got my name and my number on there. *[Laughter]* One of these days, I'll own a private vehicle, and I may just put this on my vehicle when I come back and see you. *[Laughter]*

Anyway, thank you all very much. Appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. at Biloxi City Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi, and his wife, Marsha; Mayor A.J. Holloway of Biloxi, MS; and Rodrick "Rocky" Pullman, supervisor, Hancock County, MS.

### **Remarks Prior to a Lunch Meeting With Elected Officials and Community Leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana**

*March 1, 2007*

It is my pleasure to be back in New Orleans. I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, the mayor, the head of the City Council, the parish presidents for joining me.

I've committed to stay involved in the rebuilding of—and the United States Senator, excuse me, Senator—and the Congressman, I beg your pardon. I committed to the people of this part of the world and the gulf coast that the Federal Government would fund recovery and stay committed to the recovery. And one of the reasons I have come down is to hear from you. I fully understand that there are frustrations, and I want to know the frustrations. And to the extent we can help, we'll help. I told the people that I would work with the Congress to write a \$110 billion check to help the people of Louisiana and Mississippi, and that check has been written. And now it's incumbent upon us to get the money into people's hands.

Sometimes it's hard to see progress when you're living close to the scene. I guess the New Orleans Saints football team represents to me what's happening in this part of the State—it is a resurgence; there's a renewal. Even though there's a lot of work done, the spirit of the people down here is strong.

And so I want to thank these leaders for joining me. It means a lot to me. It's good to be with you. It's also good to be in a place where you can buy some pretty good food. *[Laughter]* I'm looking forward to the visit.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. at Lil' Dizzy's Cafe. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Oliver M. Thomas, Jr., president, New Orleans City Council; Aaron F. Broussard, president, Jefferson Parish; Kevin

Davis, president, St. Tammany Parish; Billy Nungesser, president, Plaquemines Parish; Henry Rodriguez, president, St. Bernard Parish; M.E. Taylor, president, Washington Parish; and Senator David Vitter and Representative William J. Jefferson of Louisiana.

### Remarks at Samuel J. Green Charter School in New Orleans

March 1, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Dr. Tony, thank you very much for your kind introduction. God, I love the smile on his face. [Laughter]

Think about this: You can play recess outside in a garden. So, like, those are the two things I was good at, at school—[laughter]—eating and playing. [Laughter]

But I really appreciate you inviting me over. Somebody said, “Well, why did you come to Samuel J. Green Charter School in New Orleans, Louisiana, when there’s other places to go?” Well, the answer is, there’s nothing better than being in the middle of a bright spot, a place that just shines with optimism, in a part of the world that has gone through some really difficult times. And so I’m here to herald success—success for today and, equally important, success for the future of this important city.

And I thank you all for giving me a chance to come. I mean, there’s nothing more illustrative of the issues that this community faces than to think that that blue line represented water and destruction. And yet we’re now dry; we’re on dry land, recovering. And so I’ve come back to New Orleans, Louisiana, to remind people that the Federal Government still knows you exist, still knows you have issues, and wants to work with your leadership to address those issues.

I know the Picard family is here. Thank you for coming. Gaylen was the wife of Cecil, who helped guide Louisiana’s schools through the worst of the storms. He has passed away. I’m honored to be in your presence. I know that you miss your good man, as does the people of New Orleans. He was a person that served your community with a lot of class. And I know he would be proud of places like Green that are setting high standards, strong centers of excellence, mak-

ing sure every single child gets an education. Thanks for being here today. It means a lot.

Sorry Laura is not here. She and I, by the way, spent some of our youth here in New Orleans. I really don’t want to go into all the details of what—[laughter]—but we know something about the town. And it’s a great place. And she loves New Orleans, as do I, and we’ve got a lot of friends here.

I want to thank Robin Jarvis, the superintendent of the Recovery School District, for joining us. I appreciate very much—[applause]—thank you, Robin. I want to thank some of the elected officials who have joined us here at the school, with whom I had lunch earlier, starting with your mayor. It’s good to see you, Mr. Mayor. Appreciate your time. A pleasure to be here.

The mayor and I have gotten to know each other—[laughter]—in a positive way—[laughter]—in a positive way. It’s interesting, you know, we’re kind of two strong-willed people who got thrown into a deal we didn’t ask for. Tell you an interesting story about the mayor. The first time I ever met him, we came in Air Force One right after the storm hit—a couple of days after, I think it was, and the mayor was a little irritable. [Laughter] He hadn’t had a shower. [Laughter] So I came off the plane—I knew I was dealing with a good man when I looked in his eyes and he was able to maintain a certain sense of humor in the midst of all the trauma. And so I sent him up the stairs for him to take a shower on Air Force One. [Laughter]

Everybody—yes, I was about to say—[laughter]—the president of the New Orleans City Council, Oliver Thomas, thanked me then, and he thanks me now. Good to see you, Big O. I have spent enough time down here, where I call him, “Big O.” [Laughter] He calls me, “Little G.” [Laughter]

I’m proud to be with your Lieutenant Governor. Mitch, thanks for coming; appreciate you being here. I flew down today from Washington—am I flying back with you all too? Yes. Flew down today with the Senator, David Vitter, and Congressman Bill Jefferson. Andrea, good to see you. Thanks for coming. I think they want a ride back. [Laughter]